1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

Preface

THE pages that follow describe scenes in the lives of a Negro people living in isolation in the interior of Dutch Guiana, South America. These Negroes are the descendants of runaway slaves imported from Africa, who took refuge in the dense Guiana bush and established African villages along the rivers whose rapids are their fortifications. The end of the seventeenth century already found these Negroes in constantly growing numbers up the Suriname River, and before the middle of the next century they were sufficiently organized to make repeated raids on the plantations for guns and gunpowder, for machetes and women. Several campaigns were conducted against them, but eventually final treaties were concluded with the Dutch owners of the colony, which guaranteed them their freedom. Today when a Bush Negro drinks with a white man his toast is "Free!"

Three tribal groups go to make up this Bush Negro population. The Saramacca tribe, of whom we write, is found in the heart of the colony along the upper reaches of the Suriname River (called by the Bush Negroes the "Saramacca," and hence so named in this book), and farther south along the Gran Rio and the Pikien Rio. This tribe has had the least contact with outside influences, and it is the Saramacca language which differs most from that spoken by the Negroes of the coastal region. The second is the Awka tribe, found mainly along the Marowyne (Maroni) River, which forms the boundary between French and Dutch Guiana; there are in addition several Awka villages on the lower Suriname. The third tribe, the Boni,

[p. vi is blank]

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CA8 had not acted well toward the Granman. It would be best if we did not stop there. At the others the Granman could assure us hospitality. Then there was talk of hauling wood and making rafts, for our host, who knew these people well, moved safri, too, until he at last felt the moment had come to talk about buying a boat from Ajako.

[439] When the arrangements of the sale were concluded, 123 183 186 Ajako came back to talk with us. He had heard that we had a machine which the Kromanti spirit had broken, was it true? Did it really go again? They said the Bakra had much cunning. They said the Bakra knew African magic.

The Bakra said he knew something about Africa. The Ashanti people, for instance, were a fine people.

124 "*Ma na Asante, na Sa'macca sem-* . . . —But the Ashanti 144 are Saramacca. . . . " But he would go no further, having 115 spoken only one syllable of the word for people. He became guarded. Yes, there were some Anago people from Africa on this Saramacca River, and Dahomey, and Loango, and Fanti; the Ibo peoples were not on this river. . . . And again he would say no more. Later, when we had changed the subject, he said as if in both gratitude and explanation, "*Na sa-i-'akisi, a tranga poi*—You ask about strong things."

126 But he would sing into our machine, if we liked. He 115 would sing Kromanti, if we wanted him to do so. "I won't fight your machine," he said, smiling.

[533] [539]

"*Anabobi, Anabobi,*
Anabobi, Anabobyo,
Tata Ando.
Anabobi, Ando,
Anabobi,
Tata Adjaini,
Anabobyo
Tata Fa'aku."

"They will understand this in Africa," he said, gravely, and then he moved toward the doorway and stood there

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19 October 1958 – January 1959), expeditions whose principal aim
114 was the sociological study of these populations.
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Social Structure and Way of Life

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101 The Boni Refugee Blacks. The Boni are one of the above-mentioned
[175] tribes of the Refugee Blacks, reconstituted in the course of the
eighteenth century by rebel African slaves who escaped from
B Surinam plantations (Dutch Guiana).
[131] These tribes (Saramaka, Djuka, Paramaka, Boni) live for the
[161] most part along the rivers of the interior of Surinam. They group
together a total of 25,000 persons.
B
161 With very rare exceptions, the Refugee Blacks are pure Africans.
[144] These populations, vigorous and well adapted to the country, have
experienced in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries
a remarkable demographic increase, attested to by all the authors.
Descended from small rebel groups which could not have contained
more than a few hundred women, they are now estimated at more
than 25,000 persons.
B
162 The Boni of the Upper Maroni, the subject of the present study,
103 number approximately 800, of whom 660 are on the French bank
[161] (the villages of Boniville, l'Enfant Perdu, Loka, Asisi, Papaïton,
and Kormotibo) and 140 on the Surinam bank (the village of Kotika).
These villages were established long ago.
B
613 Each of them groups together a matrilineage, i.e., the
621 descendants in the uterine line of one single founding ancestress;
769 certain villages know their genealogy in its entirety back to this
ancestress, who must have lived at the end of the eighteenth
century. The members of the lineage are united by the cult of the
B ancestors, which binds them firmly to their natal village and to
[622] their land. The social system is based essentially on this cult,
[793] the chief of the village being above all the priest of the ancestors.
B Strictly speaking, there is no marriage, but only an acknowl-
581 edged concubinage which entails neither a contract between the

Boni
Emerillon SQ8
Rucuyen SR12
Carib SR9
Locono SR10

/11 cont./

3) The autochthonous Indians are represented on the Maroni Basin by three groups:

—The Arawak and the Kalifia (Galibi) (about 500 persons) live downstream from Saint-Laurent; they live in symbiosis with the population of the city, whom they supply with fish and manioc. A century of contact with the Creole population has produced a certain alteration in their customs and traditional way of life, but the essentials of their tribal organization remain intact.

—The Oayana /Oyana/ or Roucouyennes /Rucuyen/ (about 250 persons) live on the Litani upstream from the Boni with whom they are in close relationship. They have not undergone any alteration in their race or their way of life.

—The Emerillon, who belong to the Tupi-Guarani group, form a small grouping on the way to extinction.

The Refugee Blacks. —Ethnic origin. No comprehensive anthropological study has as yet been undertaken on the Refugee Blacks. Not possessing the specialized knowledge necessary for tackling this study, we have left it entirely aside. Besides, we doubt that it would give important detailed information on the ethnic origin of the Refugee Blacks. Study of archive documents concerning the slave trade would certainly give more particulars; it is certain from now onwards that their origin is very diverse; the slave traders took on provisions principally on the coast of West Africa, but also in the Congo and in present-day Angola; the African words figuring in the present dialects come from the populations of these various regions. So it is not surprising to meet rather variable skull forms and statures among the Refugee Blacks.

The Refugee Blacks are in general of medium stature, that of the adult men being between 1 meter 60 and 1 meter 75; the average is a little below 1 meter 70.

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142 Certain somatic characteristics are found frequently among them. The /12/ majority of individuals are dolichocephalic,
144 slightly platyrrhine, have thick, flattened-out lips. These characteristics bring more especially to mind the populations of the Ivory Coast and Dahomey. The human types of the Congo and Equatorial Africa in general are rarely seen among the Refugee Blacks. This is a surprising finding, given the diversity of origin
175 of the slaves imported into Surinam. The fact can be attributed to the very special conditions under which the tribes of Refugee Blacks were formed: much more than from massive revolts, they were born of kinds of "maquis," enlarged from age to age, of all those who escaped at the peril of their lives. One can think that the majority of these indomitable people must have come from the large tribes of the African west, more combative and more thoroughly organized. The archives of the colony of Surinam, like those of French Guiana, pointed out especially that the "Coromantin" Negroes (that is, it seems, the ones who came from the Ashanti country) were so intractable that they could hardly be utilized and that they were found at the origin of most of the revolts.

144 Even if the Refugee Blacks do not represent one race in the rigorous sense of the term, they give, compared with the Blacks of America in general, a striking sensation of homogeneity and
175 unity. Actually, it is important to remark that they have practical-
144 ly only African blood; mulattoes were rare in Surinam plantations in the 18th century, for the documents of the time attest that most of these, more sensitive to malaria than the Blacks, were employed as workmen in Paramaribo. They must have had few chances to run away, and few of them would have been able to stand for very long the rebels' exceptionally harsh conditions of living.
144 The Refugee Blacks, thought of as representatives of the main African Negro race, can thus be considered a homogeneous

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population. This point of view is confirmed by the study of their demography which shows characteristics well marked and very different from those of the other ethnic groups, a fact illuminated by the study of pathology.

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Man and the natural environment. Doctor André Sausse, studying the three populations of the Maroni (1), Refugee Blacks, Indians,

1. Doctor André Sausse: Populations primitives du Maroni /Primitive Populations of the Maroni/; Paris, Larose, 1951.

and Creoles, placed for centuries in the same geographical environment and leading very close kinds of lives, has shown that they present an entirely distinct pathology and a completely different behavior with respect to the geographic environment.

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The autochthonous Indians have an extreme sensitivity to malaria, equal to that of Europeans; and one can believe that before the implantation of the new black and white populations they were living in a precarious equilibrium with the natural environment that the contact with Europeans broke. Extremely

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susceptible to lung diseases, they were decimated for centuries by epidemics of pneumonia due to microbial germs brought in with the Europeans and Blacks, without any adaptation appearing. In three centuries their number was reduced from several tens of thousands to a few hundred, without it being possible to blame any cause other than malaria and epidemics. The only ones to survive without outside help have been the groupings living in the marshy /13/ zones near the sea; for reasons not yet elucidated but which are probably related to the conditions of life of the anopheles, these zones are actually less dangerous on the whole from the point of view of malaria than the highlands (similar observations have been made in Indochina).